

Rev. M. Rippon

3185. 4. 13.
—
1-14

A
DISSERTATION, &c.



D1221

DISSERTATION

ON THE

SEVENTY WEEKS

OF

DANIEL.

THE PARTICULAR AND EXACT FULFILMENT OF WHICH
PROPHECY IS CONSIDERED AND PROVED.

By BENJAMIN FOSTER, A. M.

NEWPORT (RHODE-ISLAND) PRINTED BY PETER EDES.
MCCCLXXXVII.

DISSERTATION
ON THE

CAUSE OF THE



THE CAUSE OF THE

CAUSE OF THE

CAUSE OF THE

INTRODUCTION.

DANIEL ix. 24, 25, 26, 27. "Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

DANIEL, to whom this remarkable prediction was addressed, lived in the time of the Jews captivity in Babylon. He was a person conspicuous for wisdom and virtue: and signally honoured in the Assyrian and Persian courts. But what was of unspeakably greater importance, he was a faithful servant

vant of the Most High God, and was greatly beloved of him, whom the highest heavens cannot contain. In a land of idolatry, and before the haughty tyrants of the earth, he appeared as a witness for divine truth. Heaven has honoured him with predictions relating to the changes of empires, and the state of the church to the end of the world. I think that no person, who is acquainted with history, and gives the prophecies of Daniel an impartial examination, can avoid surprise at their most exact fulfilment. Daniel's descriptions so perfectly answer to historical facts, that Porphyry, a heathen writer, pretended that the book of Daniel could not be genuine, but must have been written after the events took place. But "what is there wanting, says the learned Dr. Newton, of external or internal evidence, to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Daniel? There is all the external evidence that can well be had or desired in a case of this nature; not only the testimony of the whole Jewish church and nation, who have constantly received this book as canonical; but of Josephus particularly, who commends him as the greatest of prophets; of the Jewish Targums and Talmuds, which frequently cite and appeal to his authority; of St. Paul and St. John, who have copied many of his prophecies, of our Saviour himself, who citeth his words, and stileth him, *Daniel the prophet*; of antient historians, who relate many of the same transactions; of the mother of the seven sons, and of the father of the Maccabees, who both recommend the example of Daniel to their sons; of old Eleazar in Egypt, who praying for the Jews then suffering under the persecution of Ptolemy Philopater, (3. Macc. vi. 6. 7.) mentions the deliverance

liverance of Daniel out of the den of lions, together with the deliverance of the three men out of the fiery furnace ; of the Jewish High Priest, who showed Daniel's prophecies to Alexander the great, while he was at Jerusalem ; and still higher, of Ezekiel, a contemporary writer, who greatly extols his *piety* and *wisdom*. Nor is the internal less powerful and convincing than the external evidence ; for the language, the stile, the manner of writing, and all other internal marks and characters are perfectly agreeable to that age ; and he appears plainly and undeniably to have been a prophet by the exact accomplishment of his prophecies, as well as those which have already been fulfilled, as those which are now fulfilling in the world."*

AMONG other prophecies of Daniel, the foregoing is worthy of special notice. It was made in answer to his fervent supplications at the Throne of grace, in order to console him under the calamities of his people, and to establish the faith of God's church in every age. About the time of the evening sacrifice on this errand is the angel Gabriel sent : and exorts Daniel to understand the matter, and consider the vision. The matter, respecting God's dispensations towards his people, is most worthy to be understood ; and for this reason the vision should be carefully and impartially considered.

I HAVE paid considerable attention to the subject ; and have succeeded in my inquiries to the satisfaction of my own mind : and hope that my observations will

* Newton's *Dis. on the prophecies*, vol. 2. p. 181.

will be found not materially to deviate from the truth. In the main they are agreeable to the sentiments of the best expositors who have written on the subject, and in lesser matters, wherein I differ from others, who are much superior to me in learning and judgment, I wish to express myself with a becoming modesty and diffidence. If I should cast any light on this important prediction I shall be amply rewarded for my trouble. And I earnestly pray that the Father of Lights may direct the serious enquiries of those into whose hands this may fall, and prosper this feeble attempt in favour of divine revelation!

A

DISSERTATION, &c.

CHAPTER I.

Redemption by the Death of Christ.

THE glorious work at the end of the Seventy Weeks was to be effected by the MESSIAH or CHRIST. The word signifies the Anointed; and respects the anointing prophets, priests and kings, to the respective offices they sustained. Accordingly Christ, in an eminent sense, was anointed, or set apart for the work in which he engaged. For this he received a commission from his Father; and for this he was anointed with the divine spirit above measure. At his baptism the heavens were opened, and the spirit of God descended upon him as a dove.

THE Messiah is spoken of in the prediction as a Prince, because he was anointed or consecrated to be head over all things to the church, and to reign till he had put all things under his feet. He was "a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." (Acts v. 31.)

THE great event predicted of the Messiah, was, that he should be cut off. The original word, when it has respect to death, strictly signifies, as is acknowledged by the Jews themselves, a penal excision, or a cutting off upon account of sin. The effects of sin were to be seen in the Messiah's death. Although we are informed that by the stroke of justice he was to fall a victim, and be

B

cut

cut off, yet, we are assured, *not for himself*. He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. His sufferings were the effects, not of any sin of his own, but of ours. For the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all, that by his stripes we might be healed. How strikingly applicable is this part of the prediction to the crucifixion of our Saviour; the professed end of whose mission was to shed his blood for the remission of sins, and whose innocence was acknowledged by the very persons concerned in his death! Judas confesses he has betrayed innocent blood. Pilate, though accessory to his death, solemnly and formally proclaims the righteousness of his character, and declares that he finds no fault in him. Pilate is charged by his wife to have nothing to do with this just man. One of the malefactors, crucified with him, bears his dying testimony that Jesus had done nothing amiss. And the centurion glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man!"

THE great purposes answered, and the important blessings procured by the death of the Messiah are expressed in several particulars.

FIRST. He was "to finish," or, as rendered literally from the hebrew, he was "to restrain the transgression." When Christ suffered the penalty of the law, man's apostacy from his God was exhibited in its native vileness, and painted in all its odious colours. Then his transgression of the divine law appeared as an exceeding bitter thing, and even as an infinite evil. And how adapted were the sufferings of Christ, considered in this point of view, to suppress the vicious inclinations of the mind; to curb our unruly passions, and to stop the sinner in his mad career of vanity and rebellion! In thousands of instances these were the glorious effects of the sufferings and death of the Messiah! The idolatry of the heathen world was destroyed: repentance was enkindled in the human breast; and heaven-daring offenders were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and satan to God.

SECONDLY.

SECONDLY. The Messiah was "to make an end of sins:" that is, as the learned Grotius observes, the punishment of sin. The word in the original, here translated "to make an end," signifies "to seal." And as sealing supposes the instrument sealed to be perfected or completely formed; so, when Christ expired on the cross, he sealed the punishment of sin, or ended those sufferings for sin which he had engaged to endure, and drank the last of the bitter-cup which was assigned him by his heavenly Father.

THIRDLY. He was "to make reconciliation for iniquity." And accordingly Christ sustained the penal effects of sin, and rendered it consistent with divine justice for the guilty to escape the punishment to which they were exposed. The evil of sin is inconceivably great; but the price of our redemption was infinitely meritorious, and perfectly adequate to the removal of our guilt, and to our security from its deserved and insupportable weight.

FOURTHLY. He was "to bring in everlasting righteousness." A righteousness unchanging in its nature and eternal in its effects; which is adapted to answer the great purposes of heaven, and the best interests of immortal souls was wrought out by our divine Immanuel when here on earth. What relief must this afford to the wounded spirit! what a source of consolation to him who seriously reflects that shortly he must be arraigned before the tribunal of a holy God, and is convinced of the utter insufficiency of his own righteousness to sustain him in the trying scene! (Rom. iii. 21.) "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." (x. 4.) "for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

FIFTHLY. He was "to seal up the vision and prophecy." As sealing is used to confirm the contents of the instrument which is sealed, so prophecy in general, and

this vision in particular, by the great work of the Messiah, were to receive divine evidence of their authenticity. The works which Christ did, especially the wonders which attended his completing the work of our salvation, as they strikingly corresponded with, so they gave testimony to the truth of former predictions.

SIXTHLY. "The Most Holy was to be anointed." As the Messiah, with the greatest justice may be called the Most Holy, so, it is observed, that a proverbial expression of this import has been in use among the Jews. And their ancient writers frequently apply these terms to the Messiah. Eben Ezra expressly says, "the Seventy Weeks are—to the sealing the Messiah the Holy of Holies."* And Nachmanides, another rabbi of that nation, speaking of this prophecy, observes, "The Holy of Holies is the Messiah, who is sanctified from among the sons of David."† Anointing was not only a solemn form of consecration, but a practice expressive of the succession of joy and happiness to seasons of mourning and distress. (Eccle. ix. 7, 8. 2 Sam. xii. 20.) And with the utmost propriety Christ may be said to have been the subject of a divine and glorious anointing, when the mournful state of his exquisite sufferings being ended, he left the gloomy mansions of the dead, and triumphantly ascended into heaven, (Heb. i. 8, 9.) "But unto the son he saith—thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

CHAPTER

* Broughton's *Chronology*, preface.

† Owen on the Heb. vol. i. Exercise, xiv.

CHAPTER II.

The Destruction of the City and Sanctuary.

THE angel Gabriel informs Daniel that "the people of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, &c." That is the Romans or Gentiles, who in future, more especially, were to be under the government of the Messiah, in his providence, were to effect this destruction for the cruelty of the Jews in his late crucifixion.

As the death of the Messiah is expressed in connection with the destruction of the city and sanctuary, it is worth our while to observe the crime of the Jews in the former as, in a very striking manner, corresponding with their punishment in the latter. "They put Jesus to death when the nation was assembled to celebrate the passover; and when the nation was assembled too to celebrate the passover, Titus shut them up within the walls of Jerusalem. The rejection of the true Messiah was their crime; and their following of false Messiahs to their destruction was their punishment. They sold and bought Jesus as a slave; and they themselves were afterwards sold and bought as slaves at the lowest prices. They preferred a robber and murderer to Jesus, whom they crucified between two thieves; and they themselves were afterwards infested with bands of thieves and robbers. They put Jesus to death lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation; and the Romans did come and take away their place and nation. They crucified Jesus before the walls of Jerusalem; and before the walls of Jerusalem they themselves were crucified in such numbers, that it is said room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses

crosses for the bodies."* And I would add, when they led Jesus forth to be put to death, they made him a subject of their sport and derision; and multitudes of themselves afterwards were exposed and put to death in the exhibitions and sports of their enemies. They were guilty of shedding the blood of the blessed Jesus; and afterwards all their city streamed with blood, and if they found any provision, though stiffened with blood, they eagerly snatched it away and devoured it! "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?—for thy judgments are made manifest!" (Rev. xv. 3, 4.)

As the desolation of the city and sanctuary was a punishment inflicted on the Jews by the Messiah for their guilty conduct in his crucifixion, we may see the utmost propriety in his undertaking to predict, in the most circumstantial manner, the melancholy events of this desolation. The scene described most exactly answered our Saviour's representation. Were there to be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places? These are spoken of by different historians, and numbered among the calamities of the times. Were there to be fearful sights and great signs from heaven? A star like to a sword with a continued blaze hung over the city for a whole year. When the people were assembled to keep the pass-over at the ninth hour of the night, it shone as light as day about the temple and altar for the space of half an hour. And the eastern gate of the temple of solid brass and exceeding heavy, and which scarcely could be shut in an evening by twenty men, and fastened by bars and bolts, was seen to open of its own accord, &c. Was the state of those who were with child and those who gave suck in those days to be peculiarly distressing? This was verified when mothers could pluck the food from the very mouths of their dear babes, and when women and children miserably

ably perished together as it were in crouds by reason of famine ; and when a woman, eminent for her family and fortune, could take the tender child which sucked at her breast, murder and boil it, and after eating one half, hide the other half for another meal ! Were there enemies to cast a trench about them, compass them round, and keep them in on every side ? This was done when the city was completely enclosed with a wall, built by the Romans in three days, which totally prevented an escape, and led the unhappy Jews to despair of a deliverance. Was the destruction of the city and sanctuary to be so fully effected that one stone was not to be left upon another that should not be thrown down ? How particularly and remarkably was this effected when Titus, as Josephus informs us, " commanded them to level with the ground ; both all the city and the temple " so " that persons coming thither would hardly have believed it had ever been inhabited. " * Does Christ predict that then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time ? Accordingly, the historian observes, " If we look into the misfortunes of all the nations upon earth, of which we have any account, let them happen in what age they would, yet if they are compared with the calamities to which the Jewish nation was exposed, they will, in my opinion, come far short. " † Were they to fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations ? And how awfully verified were these words of our Saviour ! In the whole war, ninety seven thousand were taken captive ; and more than one million, three hundred and fifty seven thousand, six hundred and sixty, of this unfortunate people were slain ! Was Jerusalem to be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled ? And how eminently has this been the state of that devoted city, for more than seventeen hundred years ! and we have reason to believe, that it will remain in this situation, till, thro'

God's

* *History of the Jewish war, b. 7. chap. i.*

† *Jewish war, Book 1.*

God's infinite mercy, the Jews shall come in with the fulness of the Gentiles. Did our Saviour particularly caution his followers in order to prevent their being involved in the approaching calamities; and direct them to flee to the mountains, when they should see Jerusalem compassed with armies? And from history it appears, that the divine counsels which they received, were the means of their salvation. They all fled over Jordan, to a village called Pella, and other adjacent places, and in those awful calamities, which are circumstantially related by Josephus, who was in the war, and an eye witness to most of the events which he relates, we are not informed of so much as one christian that perished!

Thus, in an eminent sense, the prediction of Daniel was fulfilled, "And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war, desolations are determined."

THE death of Christ, and the destruction of the city and sanctuary, stand connected or related to each other, not only in the prophecy, but also in its wonderful fulfilment. Immediately when the Messiah was cut off, "The vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," as a divine notice of the evils which were to come on the guilty inhabitants of the land about forty years after. "The Jewish rabbins themselves mention this as having happened about forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and consider it as a presage of that destruction."* And it is worthy to notice what is further remarked by one of their writers, that "forty years before the destruction of the temple—the doors of the temple opened of themselves, when Rabban Jochanan Ben Zaccai reproved them, saying, O temple, temple, wherefore dost thou fright thyself! I know thee, that thine end is to be destroyed; for so prophesied of thee, Zechariah, the son of Iddo, Zach. xi. 1. Open thy doors O Lebanon, &c."†

CHAPTER

* *Wair's Gospel Hist. b. 3, sect. xix. note.*

† *Gill on Acts iv. 6.*

CHAPTER III.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks are Four Hundred and Ninety Years.

A Week in the Hebrew language signifies a *seven*, and may, with as strict propriety of speech, be applied to years as to days. But *to which* must be determined by the occasion of the use of the word, and the connection of the passage in which it is contained. In Lev. xii. 5, where mention is made of two weeks we are to understand twice seven days, or double the number of days just expressed in a preceding verse. And the weeks of harvest mentioned in Jer. v. 24. are the seven weeks of days or forty-nine days, the distance of time between the pass-over, and the feast of pentecost, called also the feast of weeks, Deut. xvi. 9. compared with Exod. xxxiv. 22. Deut. xvi. 10, 16. 2 Chron. viii. 13. Num. xxviii. 26. If I mistake not, these are all the passages in the old testament, except in the book of Daniel, where the word is used to denote a week or weeks of days. And in every passage the mode of expression, or its connection with other verses evidently lead us to consider it in this sense.

WITH the Jews there was not only a week of days, but also a week of years. Not only will the real signification of the word admit of this explanation, but thus it is repeatedly applied in the holy scriptures. After Jacob had taken Leah to be his wife, when he had served seven years, Laban says to him respecting Rachel, "fulfil the week of this, and we will give thee also this, for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years*." To which it is immediately added, "and Jacob

C

did

* According to the Heb.

did so, and fulfilled her week :” that is, as it soon after follows, he “ served with him yet seven other years,” (Gen. xxix. 27, 28, 30.)

WE are informed that “ Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Impressed with the evils of this seventy years captivity, he deplores these calamities in most fervent supplications to his God. And in answer to these supplications he is addressed by the angel Gabriel, and told that seventy sevens were determined upon his people, not of days, but of years ; by which the duration of his people’s captivity had been measured, and to which Daniel had just been attending. Their enjoyment of the blessings of God’s covenant was to continue seven times as long as that desolating captivity which so afflicted his mind. The one was seventy years : but the other was to be seventy weeks or sevens of years, or four hundred and ninety years. That the weeks here are to be understood of weeks of years, will appear more evident, if we observe that when Daniel soon after comes to speak of our common weeks, he alters his manner of expression, and calls them, it seems, in distinction from the other, weeks of days.” In those days I Daniel was mourning three weeks of days. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three weeks of days were fulfilled*.” (x. 2, 3.)

THE Jews had special occasion to measure their time by weeks, or sevens of years when they came into the land of Canaan. “ When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof ; but in

* According to the Hebrew

in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land," (Lev. xxv. 2, 3, 4.) And at the expiration of this first week, and the seventh year of the week, called the Sabbatical year, they were to begin to reckon the forty-nine years which terminated in the year of jubilee, "and thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then thou shalt cause the trumpet of jubilee to sound," &c. (ver. 8, 9.)

As the angel Gabriel informs Daniel of the people's returning from their captivity to possess again the same land, he expresses the duration of their civil and religious privileges in terms denoting the same spaces of time. And as one or the first week of years, when Israel began the possession of the promised land under Joshua, is more peculiarly noticed in divine history, so one week on which the covenant was to be confirmed, is particularly expressed in the prediction. And as forty nine years, or seven weeks, succeeded the first seven years of Israel's enjoyment of the land of Canaan, and ended in the first jubilee ever observed by that people; so in the prophecy seven weeks or forty nine years are mentioned, in the first seven years of which the commandment was to go forth to restore and build Jerusalem. The allusion is so natural and striking as I think not to leave room to doubt but that one has reference to the other, and that by weeks in the prophecy we are to understand weeks of years; and consequently that the Seventy Weeks are four hundred and ninety years, at the expiration of which the Messiah was to be cut off. "The Jews universally acknowledge, says Dr. Owen, that the sevens here denote sevens of years; so that the whole duration of the seventy sevens comprizeth four hundred and ninety years*."

* On the Hebrews exercita, xiv.

CHAPTER IV.

Seventy Weeks before the Death of Christ the Covenant was confirmed.

AS I am persuaded that the one week mentioned in the prophecy, on which the covenant was to be confirmed with many, should be considered as the first of the seventy, I think it proper in the first place to give my reasons for it in the following particulars.

FIRST. The Hebrew word *Achad* or *Achat*, here rendered one, in many passages of scripture is translated the *first*. And the word retains this signification not only in the Hebrew, but in the Chaldee and Syriac, and perhaps in all the oriental languages. In Gen. i. 5, the same word is used to express the first day of the creation. In Gen. ii. 11, the first river of Paradise. In Num. xxix. 1, the first day of the month. In Dan. vi. 2, the first of Darius's three presidents. In Dan. vii. 1, the first year of Belshazzar. And twice in this very chapter, (ver. 2, 2.) which contains the prophecy under consideration, it is used to express the first year of the reign of Darius. And in this place, where is the same word, I think is meant the first of Seventy Weeks.

SECONDLY. We may observe that at the end of sixty-nine weeks the Messiah was to be cut off; and at the end of the seventy the transgression was to be finished, sin to be ended, reconciliation to be made for iniquity, &c. which were effected when the Messiah was cut off. If this one week was to succeed the sixty-nine, it was also to succeed the seventy: and this would bring the weeks forward seven years beyond the death of Christ; and instead of seventy, the whole number of the weeks in the prophecy would be seventy-one.

THIRDLY.

THIRDLY. We are expressly informed what was to take place at the beginning of the sixty-nine weeks : the commandment was to go forth to restore and build Jerusalem. We are likewise particularly told what was to take place at their end : the Messiah was to be cut off. And we are no less expressly informed of the great events at the end of the Seventy Weeks : the transgression was to be finished, sin to be ended, reconciliation to made for iniquity, an everlasting righteousness to be brought in, the vision to be sealed, and the Most Holy anointed. And is their beginning passed over without any express notice ? Is it not most reasonable to suppose that the famous one week in the prophecy is mentioned to refer us to something memorable to take place at the introduction of the whole seventy ?

FOURTHLY. In the expression, " he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week," it may as naturally be construed to have respect to many weeks, as to many people. And the word (*lamed*) here rendered *with* most commonly answers to the prepositions *to* and *for* in our common translation. There are several instances of this in the book of Daniel. We find this construction of the word in the chapter preceding that of our prophecy, where it is observed, " The vision shall be for many days," (ver. 26.) and in the chapter following it, where it is said, " For yet the vision is *for* many days," (ver. 14.) And agreeably to this, the import of the expression may be that the covenant should receive a confirmation in the first week, for many or the whole number of weeks, until their expiration, when the Messiah should put an end to that dispensation.

FIFTHLY. The covenant to be confirmed for this week, I think must mean the divine government and religion of the Jews. This evidently is intended by the covenant in other passages of the prophecies of Daniel. " The Prince of the covenant," (chap. xi. 22.) is thought

thought to be Onias, the high priest of the Jewish religion, who was divested of his priest-hood by Antiochus Epiphanes. And the violent opposition of the latter to the laws and religion of God's people is expressed by his heart's being "against the holy covenant," (ver. 28.) and his having "indignation against the holy covenant," (ver. 30.) And "those who forsook the holy covenant," (ver. 30.) are such as apostatized from this religion. And in the supplication of Daniel, to which the revelation of these weeks is a gracious answer, express mention is made of this covenant with the Jews, (ver. 4.) But as the Jewish religion or dispensation was abolished at the death of Christ, this covenant was not to have been confirmed at that period. And therefore we are necessarily led to the beginning of the weeks; and to conclude that this one week precedes the sixty-nine, and completes the Seventy Weeks in the prophecy.

ACCORDING to the most approved computations, our blessed Saviour was crucified in the year of the Julian period 4746, and in the year of the world 4036. As this was the period when the weeks of Daniel were to come to an end, by subtracting from each of these numbers 490, the years contained in the Seventy Weeks, we are led back to the time, when they were to begin. And accordingly we find that this was in the year of the Julian period 4256, and in the year of the world 3546. The Empire that then subsisted was the Persian: the monarch who then reigned was Artaxerxes Longimanus; and this was the seventh year of his reign. The learned chronologers and expositors Alsted, Spanhem, Owen, Prideaux, Bedford, and Stackhouse, whom, on this occasion, I have consulted, agree that this was exactly Seventy Weeks of years, or four hundred and ninety years from the death of Christ. And we need only turn to the seventh and following chapters of the book of Ezra, and read there the transactions of the seventh year of the same Artaxerxes, in order to be convinced that the covenant or dispensation of
the

the Jews was most literally and remarkably confirmed at this very time ! It was confirmed by the Lord God of their fathers, (chap. ix. ver. 27, 28.) It was confirmed by Artaxerxes the greatest monarch on earth, (ver. 6.) It was confirmed by his seven counsellors, (ver. 14.) It was confirmed by all the king's mighty princes, (ver. 28.) It was confirmed by the lieutenants and governors of the provinces, (chap. viii. ver. 36.) It was confirmed by Ezra a priest and scribe of the law of God, and his brethren the priests, (viii. 24. &c.) And it was confirmed by all the people, when they made a solemn covenant with their God, (x. 3, 9, &c.)

As the revival and establishment of the religious state of the people was a most important undertaking, Ezra with the greatest attention engaged in the work. It is observed that he " had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments," (vii. 10.) On the first month of the religious year of the Jews, called Nisan, the very month on which the Messiah was cut off, and the space of time expressed in the prophecy before that solemn event took place, even to a month, Ezra, who was a priest and scribe of the law of his God, sets out from Babylon with the law of his God, or the book of the covenant in his hand, and with a very extensive commission from the king, to confirm in Jerusalem the religious government of his people. No commission was ever given by a heathen monarch so much in favour of their religion as this. By it Ezra was authorised to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem *according to the law of his God* ; to dispose of the presents in silver and gold, *after the will of his God* ; that *whatsoever was commanded by the God of heaven* should be diligently done *for the house of the God of heaven* ; that magistrates and judges should be appointed, *after the wisdom of his God*, to judge all the people beyond the river, all *such as knew the laws of his God* ; and to teach them that knew them not.

THE

THE Jews consider Ezra as another Moses, and the second founder of their religion. They say, The law was given by Moses; but after it had been in a manner lost to the people, during the Babylonish captivity, it was recovered and restored by Ezra. And their doctors generally believe that he was Malachi, the last of the prophets, whose name signifies a messenger; and called so because he was sent of God to revive and confirm their religion.

It is supposed that after Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem he collected together different copies of the divine law, and published a correct edition of those sacred writings: that he substituted the Chaldee character or letters in the room of the ancient Hebrew, or what is now called the Samaritan: that as by reason of the capacity the Chaldee language was more commonly used and the Hebrew had become in a measure a dead language, he inserted the vowel-points in the holy scriptures, to prevent the true sense from being lost: that the law was now divided into fifty-four sections; as every third year, and sometimes every second, contained thirteen months; one of which sections was to be read on each Sabbath till the reading of the whole law should be completed at the end of a year: and that for this purpose synagogues began to be used which were so numerous in the time of our Saviour.

THE Jewish writers inform us that about this time the spirit of prophecy ceased. As the will of God in his law was now to be communicated to the people at stated seasons, and in a regular way, there was not, as before, that evident occasion for the mind of heaven to be revealed in an extraordinary or miraculous manner. At the beginning of the weeks in the time of Joshua, when the people began to eat of the old corn of the land, they were no longer fed with manna from heaven; so in the beginning of the weeks of Daniel the happy confirmation of God's covenant with his people, in some measure superseded

perfed the use of fpecial prophetic communications. Joſephus ſuggeſts the ſpirit of inſpiration was at this time in ſome meaſure withdrawn, in the following obſervations, "The number of our books are—two and twenty, containing the hiſtory of all preceeding time, and not without cauſe, are eſteemed to be divine. Of this number five are of Moſes, which contain the laws, and a ſeries of actions performed from the formation of mankind till its deſtruction.—From the death of Moſes, till the Empire of Artaxerxes, who, after Xerxes reigned over the Perſians, thoſe prophets who ſucceeded Moſes, comprized in thirteen books the occurrences that fell out in their times : the four others contain hymns in praiſe of God, and diſplay uſeful precepts of life. But every thing happening from the reign of Artaxerxes to our days,—are not ſo authentic, or carry ſo much authority with them as the former books*."

THE Romans, who in the providence of God were eminently concerned in the laſt great events of this prophecy, began at this time to make a figure in the world. In the ſame week of years that Ezra was ſent from Babylon to Jeruſalem, with the law or book of the covenant in his hand, three ambaffadors were ſent by the Romans to the cities of Greece ; there to collect the moſt excellent laws, from thoſe of Draco, Solon, and Lycurgus, and to bring them to Rome : which laws, engraven on twelve pillars of braſs, were termed the laws of the twelve tables ; and laid the foundation for the future government of that people.

ANOTHER remarkable inſtance of the confirmation of God's covenant in the firſt of the weeks is afforded to us in the thirteenth year of Ahaſuerus ; who, according to the Septuagint, Apocrypha, and Joſephus, was the ſame as Artaxerxes: Haman, the chief favorite of this monarch,

D

procured

* *Against Apion. book 1.*

procured a decree for the total destruction of the Jews in every part of his extensive dominions. But if this wicked and malicious purpose had been put in execution, how could the promises of the covenant, made unto the fathers, have been fulfilled?

“THE latter Targum upon the book of Esther gives us this account of Mordecai’s behaviour upon this sad occasion, viz. That in the midst of the streets he made his complaint, saying, What a heavy decree is this, which the king and Haman have passed, not against a part of us, but against us all, to root us out of the earth! whereupon all the Jews flocked about him, and having caused the book of the law to be brought to the gate of Shushan, he, being covered with sackcloth, read therein these words out of Deut. iv. 30, 31. “When thou art in tribulation, and all these things come upon thee, in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient to his voice (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God) he will not forsake thee, nor destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he swore unto them: after which he exhorted them to fasting, humiliation, and repentance, according to the example of the Ninevites*.” And what a series of remarkable events took place through the whole of this week, by which they were secured from the impending ruin, and the gracious purposes of heaven were effected! In the first year of the week when Ezra, a priest and a scribe of the law of his God, was attempting the establishment of religion in Jerusalem, Esther, of the same nation, was admitted to the dignity of queen in the royal palace of Shushan. About the second year Mordecai discovers the treasonable designs of Balthazar and Teresh, by which he afterwards was capacitated to perform the most signal services for his brethren. And at the close of the sixth year the Jews are saved from the threatening storm, and many become proselytes to their religion! and as the seventh year was to be a Sabbath of rest unto the land,

* Stackhouse’s Hist. of the Bible, vol. 4. p. 338.

land, and the people under Joshua, on this year rested from war, so now the Jews on this year rested from their enemies, and were restored to great honor and joy ! and how strikingly was the prophecy fulfilled, “ he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week ! ”

How evidently preparatory were these events of divine Providence to the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom among men ! that nation of which he was to be born, and out of which the first instruments of promoting his religion were to be sent, were now saved from utter destruction ! that law which the Messiah was to fulfil and to which his apostles were to appeal for the proof of his divine mission, began now to be transcribed into numerous copies, and rendered capable of being better understood by the people ! synagogues began now to be set up for the weekly reading of the law not only in Judea and Jerusalem, but in other nations among whom the Jews had been dispersed ; and in these synagogues, after the Messiah was cut off, his ministers stood up to plead their master's cause, and their labours here were attended with the most astonishing success ! The religious state of the Jews was not now so striking to the human eye as before their captivity : but was more adapted to edify the mind, and to render their services acceptable in the sight of God. It assumed more the form of that kingdom which was not to be of this world.

As no period can with any propriety be assigned for the conclusion of these weeks but that at which Jesus of Nazareth was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, so no æra can justly be assigned, I think, for their commencement but that at which Ezra went up to Jerusalem to regulate the religious state of the Jews. It answers as we have seen in a striking manner to the prophetic description of their beginning ! and as the distance of time between these different periods was exactly Seventy Weeks of years, or four hundred and ninety years, the time expressed in the prediction to a month, can there be room left for a misapplication ?

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

From the going forth of the Commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Death of Christ were Sixty-nine Weeks.

THIS commandment was not the decree of Cyrus, in the first year of his reign, in which liberty was given to build the temple ; but nothing said in it in relation to building the city (Ezra i. 2, 3, 4.) And as the decree of Darius, in the sixth year of his reign, was merely to revive and confirm the decree of Cyrus, we have no reason to believe this to be the important commandment expressed in the prophecy. It was doubtless the policy of the Persian monarchs to keep the Jews in a depressed situation ; especially, not to suffer them again to build the walls of Jerusalem. In the third year of Cyrus, the angel Gabriel, who before had spoken to Daniel of the weeks, now informs him that "there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all : and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia," (Dan. xi. 2.) As Cyrus was the monarch who then reigned, we must consider these four kings, who were yet to stand up in Persia, as his immediate successors. To him succeeded Cambyfes his son, called in Ezra (iv. 6.) Ahasuerus, and who obstructed the building of the temple. Next to him was Smerdis, called the Magian, who ascended the throne by deception, pretending to be the son of Cyrus and the brother of Cambyfes. His successor was Darius Hyftaspes, who gave permission to the Jews to carry on the building of the temple (Ezra vi.) The fourth king, who was to stir up all against the realm of Grecia, was Xerxes who engaged in an expedition against the Greeks (according to Herodotus) with an army and attendants of

of all sorts, amounting to not less than five millions; but finally met with a total and disgraceful defeat.

BUT why only four yet to stand up in Persia, when there were several others after these four who swayed the sceptre in that empire? I answer, only this number were to stand up to obstruct the restoration of the Jews to their former privileges and the building of the city of Jerusalem. For of the opposition of the Persian princes to the happiness of God's people the Jews, the angel had been speaking, (chap. x. ver. 13, 20.) and therefore the Jews were not to expect a restoration to the important predicted blessings, till after the removal of the last of the four succeeding monarchs to Cyrus. And as Xerxes was the fourth, we are led to infer that the mournful state of the Jews changed in the reign of his son and successor Artaxerxes Longimanus.

IN his reign, not only their religious government was established, but the commandment went forth to restore and build Jerusalem. The person raised up to procure and put in execution this important decree was Nehemiah. He was promoted to the dignity and sustained the office of cup-bearer to the king in the palace of Shushan. Here he is told, by certain Jews, who had lately, it appears, been at Jerusalem, that "the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire," (Neh. i. 2, 3.) Peculiarly affected with this sorrowful intelligence, in his distress he makes application to God in fasting and prayer. When admitted into the royal presence, and interrogated the cause of the sadness of his countenance, he says to the king, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" (ii. 2, 3.) The king attentive to his complaints, and disposed to favour his designs, asks, "For what dost thou make request

quest ?” “ If it please the king, says Nehemiah, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers sepulchres, that I may build it.” He further requests the king for letters to be given him directed to the governor beyond the river, to convey him over till he came into Judah ; and a letter directed to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, to give him timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, &c. And he informs us that the king granted him according to the good hand of his God upon him.

FURNISHED with this important commission, and honored with captains of the army and horsemen as his attendants, he sets out for Jerusalem to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. After he had been three days in Jerusalem, he “ called together the chief of the people, and having reminded them of the desolate manner in which the walls of their city lay, and exhorted them to set about the reparation of them, he produced his commission and letters to that purpose, which when they were read, so gladdened and revived their drooping spirits, that they joyfully and unanimously cried out, *Let us rise and build* !” Josephus represents the address of Nehemiah to the people, by which they were excited to engage in the work, to have been to this effect : “ You cannot but see and understand, you men of Judea, that we ourselves are, at this day, under the power and providence of the same almighty and merciful God, that did so many things for our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, out of a gracious regard to their piety and justice ; and it is by the favour of that God, that I have now obtained leave from the king to enter upon the rebuilding of your wall, and the putting of an end to the work of the temple that is yet unfinished. But taking this for granted, that you live

live among a sort of malicious and spiteful neighbours, who would do all that is to be done in nature for the crossing of your design, when they come once to see you heartily intent upon the undertaking, I shall therefore recommend it to you, in the first place, resolutely and fearlessly to cast yourselves upon God, who will most certainly defeat all the practises of your enemies; and, in the next place, to ply your business day and night, without any intermission either of care or of labour, this being the proper season for it."

ANIMATED by the counsels and presence of the governor, the people began and carried on the work with the most unremitted exertions, till the walls of Jerusalem were finished in fifty-two days.

THE undertaking and execution of this great work remarkably answered to that part of the prediction which respects the restoration and building of Jerusalem.

THE commandment was to go forth to restore and build Jerusalem: and accordingly the commandment went forth to this effect, when Nehemiah was sent to the city of his fathers sepulchres that he might build it.

THIS commandment was to go forth *into execution*: The prophecy says, "The street shall be built again, and the wall." And accordingly, the wall round about Jerusalem was undertaken to be repaired and rebuilt; and by the most vigorous exertions was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, and in about five months from the time that Nehemiah received his commission.

THE angel informs Daniel that this work was to be effected *in troublous times*. And how exactly was the prediction answered by the event? How numerous were the discouragements which attended the undertaking, and how various the schemes of the enemy to blast the design? They

They were assaulted with ridicule, scoffs, and reproach. They were threatened, by a united combination of their enemies, with total destruction. Their ruin was attempted by stratagem and craft. They were repeatedly disturbed by false accusations. They had to oppose the exertions of open enemies; and to guard against the designs of pretended friends. But they found that God in whom they trusted to be a present help in time of trouble.

THE commandment was to go forth to *restore*, as well as to build. And we may observe, that not only the wall and gates of the city were restored to their former utility; but sons and daughters who had been in bondage were restored to their parents: lands, vineyards, oliveyards and houses, which had been mortgaged, were restored to their owners; a restoration likewise was made of money, of corn, of wine, of oil, &c. (chap. v.) We have seen already that the first year of the first of Daniel's weeks was in the seventh year of Artaxerxes: and accordingly the second week began in the fourteenth year of his reign; and therefore this year, when the walls of Jerusalem were built, which was in the twentieth year of his reign, was the seventh year of the second week. And with what beauty and evident propriety does the allusion appear, which is made in the prophecy to the weeks or Sabbaths of years, which had been divinely appointed among the Jews? As the seventh year in the week was to be observed by the people as a *year of release* (Deut. xv. 1, &c.) so this seventh year, in the second prophetic week was eminently distinguished, and rendered famous on this account. The people were released from their captivity; the poor were released from their burdens; servants were released from their bondage: and the land of the people was released from its mortgages. Now was fulfilled what was foretold by the prophet Hosea (ii. 14, 15.) "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for

for a door of hope ; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

THE favourable and important events of this year of release and restoration affected the people with peculiar joy. The agreeable emotions of their minds on this account were strikingly expressed at the ensuing feast of tabernacles. It is remarked that "since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so ; and there was very great gladness," (Neh. viii. 17.) "The meaning is that the joy since that time had never been so great, as it was upon this occasion ; for which the Jews themselves assign this reason, viz. That in the days of Joshua they rejoiced, because they had got possession of the land of Canaan, and now they equally rejoiced, because they were restored, and quietly settled in it, after they had been long cast out of it†."

FROM a number of considerations then we are necessarily led to consider the commission of Nehemiah, which was given in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, as that important commandment which was to go forth to restore and build Jerusalem, mentioned in the prophecy.

As we have seen the truth of the prophecy in regard to this glorious commission, and its happy execution, let us attend to its truth in regard to the distance of the going forth of the commandment from the time when the Messiah was cut off. The angel says, "That from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks ; and threescore and two weeks :—and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off." That is, the distance of time between these important events was to be sixty-nine weeks. But it is necessary, particularly, to be
E observed

† Stackhouse, vol. 4. p. 364.

observed that, as the time here is expressed by weeks, if the commission was granted at any time in the first of the sixty-nine weeks, and the Messiah was cut off at the conclusion of the last week, the prophecy has obtained an exact fulfilment. It was common for the Jews to make a computation of time in this manner. This might be illustrated by many examples : but among others, let the reader attend to the following instances. Though our blessed Saviour laid in the grave three days, we are not from this to infer that his burial was at the beginning of the first day, and his resurrection at the end of the last. It is enough to find that sometime within the respective days, those two events were accomplished. A child which was eight days old was to be circumcised : that is, a child which was born sometime on the first of these eight days, was circumcised on the last. Our Saviour's appearance among his disciples after eight days (John xx. 26.) has respect to a former appearance of his among them, which was not before, or at the beginning, but in the evening of the first day (ver. 19.) For the same reason it is not necessary to find that the commission to restore and build Jerusalem was granted before, or at the beginning of the first of the sixty-nine weeks before the death of Christ. If the commission went forth at some time in the first of these weeks and concluded when Christ expired on the cross, we have afforded to us an additional evidence of the truth of the prediction.

AND this, according to the calculations of the most accurate chronologers, and the best historians, was actually the case. The commandment went forth in the month Nisan, and in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king. And as we have already seen, this was the last or seventh year of one week; we must date the beginning of the next sixty-eight weeks from the month Nisan, in the twenty-first year of the king. And this was in the year of the Julian period 4270, and in the year of the world 3560. And if we add to each of these numbers the remaining
sixty

sixty-eight weeks or four hundred and seventy six years; we are led to the year of the Julian period 4746 and to the year of the world 4036, to the year and even to the month on which our blessed Saviour was crucified. Christ suffered in the time of the passover, which was in the month Nisan : and from this very month we are necessarily led to date the first period from whence we reckon to the last. And now behold the man ! Behold him of whom Moses and the prophets spake ! In the last week the Messiah makes his appearance ; and at the expiration of the last week, literally, as foretold by the angel, as a devoted victim, is cut off.

UNDOUBTEDLY our Saviour when on earth was called the Messiah or Christ, from a persuasion that he was the person referred to in this, as well as other prophecies, and that John the Baptist had this in view when he sent to enquire of Christ, "*Art thou he that should come or do we look for another ?*" The very same appellation is here given to Christ as is in the prophecy, where he is called, the Prince *that shall come*. And John intimates, by the enquiry, that the present was the time to expect the Messiah's appearance. He likely, as well as others, observed that Daniel's weeks were nearly ended ; and from this were led to look with earnest expectations for that glorious Prince. It also appears that about this time an opinion very generally prevailed, both among Jews and Gentiles, that an eminent Personage would soon arise in the east, who would have the government of the world,

THE four great empires or kingdoms of the world, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian and the Roman, as they much effected the state of God's people the Jews, are more especially the subjects of the prophecies of Daniel. And the weeks now under consideration have respect to the changes or mark the revolutions, of those kingdoms in a very striking manner. Before we conclude this chapter it is proper to notice this in respect to the two first of these

kingdoms. The beginning of the weeks exhibits a remarkable deliverance from the evils of a seventy years captivity, under the empire of Babylon, represented to Nebuchadnezzar by the head of a great image, which was of fine gold (Dan. ii. 32.) and represented to Daniel by the first of four great beasts like to a lion (vii. 4.) This important revolution in the state of the Jews was effected under the empire of the Medes and Persians, which was the silver breast and arms of the image of Nebuchadnezzar; and the second beast, like to a bear, of Daniel.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VI.

Sacrifice and Oblation made to cease for half a Week.

IT is observed in the prophecy "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of a week," or rather, as Dr. Prideaux says, the passage should have been rendered "for half a week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." The latter clause in the passage appears to have been inserted by way of opposition, or as an exception to the former. The religious privileges, confirmed to God's people in the first of the Seventy Weeks, were to continue until their entire expiration at the death of the Messiah, when a more glorious dispensation should be introduced. But how natural is it to suppose that Daniel would be solicitous to be informed, if, in any period of these four hundred and ninety years, the enemies of God's people would be permitted to suppress the free enjoyment of their religion? and if so, for how long this interruption was to continue? He is told that the sacrifice and the oblation should be made to cease for half a week, or three years and six months. In the time of Antiochus Epiphanes this prediction had a literal and exact fulfilment. According to Josephus, the sacrifices of the temple were suppressed for just this space of time! Speaking of Antiochus, he has these very words; "He gave his soldiers liberty to make what plunder they could while he rifled the temple, and stopped the custom of offering the daily sacrifices for three years and six months*." As Antiochus was the most bitter enemy that the Jews ever had, and this the darkest period in the time predicted, with what propriety is this half week mentioned as an exception

but
for
half
a
week
&c.

* Jewish war, book 1. c. 14

ception to the general tranquility with which they were to be favoured? The dispensation of the Jews, which was to be ended at the crucifixion of our Saviour, was to receive an establishment in the first of the weeks; but the people were to be deprived of its privileges for the space of time here expressed. The contrast between the events of the one week, and those of the half week is truly striking. At the former, a vast addition was made to the treasures of the temple: at the latter, the temple was plundered of its treasures. At the former, the people were separated from the abominations of the heathens: at the latter, they were polluted with these abominations: Soon after the first, the walls of Jerusalem were built: in the half week they were pulled down on every side. In the first week, the temple of the Lord was beautified: in the half week, it was defiled. In the former, the books of the law were preserved: in the latter, the books of the law were rent in pieces, and burnt with fire. In the former, they were to teach those who knew not the laws of their God: in the latter, those who knew these laws were to be made to forget them. In fine, never did a heathen monarch appear so much in favour of God's holy covenant as in the first week: nor never did a heathen monarch, perhaps, seek its destruction so much as in the half week. (See the books of the Maccabees.)

Thus, as predicted in Dan. xi. 30. Antiochus had indignation against the holy covenant: and now was fully and strikingly verified what is further expressed by the angel, "For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate." And accordingly we read, that "They set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side." Mac. i. 54.

"WHEN ye therefore shall see, says Christ, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand,"

stand," or rather as it is in the Syric, "Which was standing in the holy place,—Then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains," (Mat. xxiv. 15, 16.) The abomination of desolation was spoken of by Daniel the prophet. It stood in the holy place in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. And when the Roman armies compassed Jerusalem, those idols of the heathen appeared on their ensigns, which were an abomination to the Jews. And as the desolation of Jerusalem attended the standing of this abomination in the temple of God, the appearance of these images on the Roman ensigns was at last to be considered as a presage of its final destruction.

In this, and in other particulars, the events of these distressing periods were remarkably similar. Before the desolation of Jerusalem by Antiochus, Onias, the worthy high priest of the Jews, was slain : and before its total destruction, the great High Priest of our profession was crucified. Before the former, armies, with all manner of instruments of war, were seen fighting with each other in the air, (2 Mac. v. 2, 3.) and before the latter, Josephus speaks of it as well attested by persons who were eye witnesses, "That there were seen before sun-set, chariots wheeling aloft in the air, all over the country, and armed companies rushing through the clouds, and throwing up trenches round cities*." In the former, the calamities of the Jews were heightened by their dissensions : and the same was the case in the latter period. In the former period, the city and sanctuary were polluted : in the latter they were wholly destroyed.

I AM of opinion, that this season of distress, is primarily referred to in Dan. xii. 7. which was to continue for a time, times, and a half. Dr. Prideaux, observes, "One particular in these prophecies of Daniel, and fulfilled under Antiochus, is especially taken notice of, as typifying in him, what was to happen under antichrist in after-times, that is the profanation of the temple at Jerusalem,

* Jewish war, b. 6. c. 31

Jerusalem, and the ceasing of the daily sacrifices in it: This Daniel said was to continue for a time, and times, and a half time, that is three years and an half; a time in that place signifying a year, and times two years, and an half time an half year, as all agree; and so long Josephus tells us the profanation of the temple, and the interrupting of the daily sacrifices in it lasted, that is from the coming of Apollonius, and his profanation of the said temple, to the purifying of it, and the new dedication of that and the new altar in it by Judas Maccabæus*."

BUT as the half week under consideration is to be considered sometime within the seventy, and the predicted events exactly answer to the history of this period, this part of the prophecy was evidently fulfilled in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

I HAVE already observed that these weeks have respect to the changes, or set bounds to the revolutions of these four great empires or kingdoms, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman in a remarkable manner. We have seen that their beginning peculiarly respected the two first of these empires: and I would now observe that the calamities of the half week commenced at an æra memorable in regard to the two last. In the same year that the sacrifice and oblation were made to cease, the Grecian empire, represented to Nebuchadnezzar by the brazen belly and thighs of a great image, and to Daniel by the third beast like to a leopard, was completely overthrown by the Romans. And the Romans, who obtained this important victory, are represented by the image's legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay; and by the fourth beast described, by Daniel as dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly. And, in the providence of God, the rise of this last mighty empire effected the desolations of Jerusalem in the half week. Antiochus was engaged in an expedition against Egypt.

* *Prideaux's Connection*, vol. 3. p. 295.

Egypt. But hearing of the success, and being struck with fear by the haughty menaces, of the Romans, he returned from Egypt, and wreaked his vengeance on the people of the Jews. Then the prophecy was fulfilled, "For the ships of Chittim shall come against him; therefore, he shall be grieved; and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant," (Dan. xi. 30.) But God in his providence, did not bring these calamities, or suffer them to come on his people in the half week, because he delighted in their misery. It was to chastise them for their sins, and to prepare the way for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ at the end of the Seventy Weeks, when the stone, spoken of by Daniel, was to be cut out of the mountain without hands; and which finally was to become a great mountain; and by which the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold were to be broken to pieces together, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; (Dan. ii. 34, 35.)

I WILL take notice in one instance in which the calamities of this period were peculiarly subservient to heaven's gracious designs under the dispensation of the gospel.

In the beginning of the weeks, as already observed, synagogues began to be erected and improved for the purpose of reading the law of God to the people every Sabbath day. And this useful and important practice continued until the beginning of the half week. Then, when the sacrifice and the oblation ceased; the reading of the law was suppressed, and the sacred copies committed to the flames. In this extremity the Jews divided the prophets into fifty-four sections, as they had done before to the law, one of which sections was read on each Sabbath until the expiration of three years and an half. Then, when they were restored to their former privileges, they resumed the practice of reading the law, and observed it as the first lesson; and also continued the practice of reading the prophets, and observed it as the second lesson;

so that when the Messiah came, the law and the prophets were read in the synagogues of the Jews every Sabbath day (Acts xiii. 27. xv. 21.) And as these synagogues, in which the law and the prophets were read, were very numerous, and to be found in various parts of the Roman empire, how gloriously subservient were these events to the appearance of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom in the world ! When the Seventy Weeks were expired, and the Messiah was cut off, his apostles to these synagogues repaired ; to the law and the prophets, read in them, they appealed ; proving to the conviction and conversion of thousands, that Jesus was the Christ who was to die for the salvation of sinners.

CONCLUSION.

WHAT evidence is afforded to us of the truth of divine revelation ! At the time specified in the prophecy to a surprising exactness, one, who was considered as the Messiah, makes his appearance, and in the manner and for the purposes represented, bows his head, and dies ! The important ends answered and blessings procured by the death of Christ are foretold in the most nervous and expressive language.—The language of Gabriel to Daniel, was the language of the apostles to the world, when they proclaimed the everlasting benefits of a crucified Saviour. Of these glorious truths they sang in prison, and in testimony of these they renounced the world and suffered the pains of death. We are told with the greatest precision, the distance of time between the confirmation of the Jewish covenant or dispensation and its end by the introduction of an everlasting righteousness, &c. We are told of a remarkable interruption of the religious privileges of the Jews, and exactly how long this interruption was to continue. We are told of the distance of time from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem to the death of the Messiah. We are told of the subsequent calamities of the Jews in the destruction of the city and sanctuary. The prophecy, in every particular, has been punctually, plainly, and almost in every instance, literally fulfilled. None but the very ignorant can doubt the authenticity of the gospel history : even a celebrated infidel* is obliged to confess “ It bears not the marks of a fiction ; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which no body presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ.” And is it possible for

us to suppose that the great events of this history could be particularly described five or six hundred years before the events took place, unless by the special interposition of that Being who is infinite in knowledge? Or can we believe the precise time and duration expressed in the prophecy in regard to these occurrences to have been matters of mere conjecture? Is it not most consistent with the divine perfections that God should reveal the state and events of the moral world to that people, who alone, of all the nations of the earth, made him the object of their adoration and worship, in order to confirm them in their faith and practice, and to teach them their dependance on himself? And when we find that a variety of events have taken place in the strictest conformity to what was recorded among this people several hundred years before, and professedly by divine direction, what reason have we to disbelieve the authority of these predictions? Upon the whole, this remarkable prophecy of Daniel will stand as an unanswerable objection to infidelity, while people have the bible in their hands, and can compare its predictions with the most incontestible historical facts.

LET it be the subject of our most fervent wishes and prayers that God's ancient people the Jews may be led, from the evident fulfilment of this prophecy, to believe that Jesus is the Christ! They are the seed of Abraham God's friend and servant, to whom were committed the divine oracles, of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, and from among whom were sent the first instruments of promoting the everlasting gospel. Many passages of scripture speak of the future conviction and restoration of this people to the favour of God. Although they abide still in unbelief, God is able to graft them in again. Their long waiting for the Messiah, and repeated disappointments has led some to believe the truth, and numbers to doubt the stability of the foundation on which they stood. From a real desire of their truest interests I could earnestly wish they might impartially attend to the following

ing relation of Dr. Hill of Cambridge in England, published in the year 1648. Says he, " I have it related from very good hands, that a citizen of London being in Aleppo, heard a very learned Jewish rabbi, being sick, call his people together, who wished them very seriously to consider the divers former captivities they had undergone for the hardness of their hearts, and now one for above one thousand six hundred years, the cause of which is doubtless our unbelief and hardness of heart. We have long looked for the Messiah, and the christians have believed in one Jesus of our nation, who was of the seed of Abraham and David, and born in Bethlehem, and (for ought we know) may be the true Messiah; and that we have suffered this long captivity, because we have not believed, but rejected him. Therefore my advice is, as my last words, that if the Messiah which we expect, do not come at or about the year 1650, accounting from the birth of their Christ, then you may know and believe that this Jesus is the Christ, and you shall have no other: and within a little time after this old Doctor died*."

HAVE the prophecies in regard to Christ's appearance in the flesh, and suffering for the salvation of sinners, been most evidently and exactly fulfilled; what reason have we confidently to expect the full accomplishment of the divine promises in his future coming to reign in the hearts of the children of men? God, who cannot lie, has promised to change the moral state of the world, and to make this earth an habitation of righteousness. Ye children of Zion rejoice! The auspicious morn will come, when the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing under his wings, when the beams of divine truth shall illumine the world, and all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest! You may sleep in the dust before this trumpet of jubilee shall sound; but when it shall sound, it will proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening

opening of the prison doors to those who are bound ; the ever blessed God shall be glorified, and Christ shall reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet. Even so, come Lord Jesus !

FROM the subject, we may further infer the certainty of his personal appearance to judge the world. He once appeared in a state of humiliation ; was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and, as represented by Daniel, in the end was cut off. But how different his appearance, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory ! When a fiery stream shall issue, and come forth from before him, when thousand thousands shall minister unto him, and ten thousand-times ten thousand shall stand before him ; when the judgment shall set, and the books shall be opened ! Every eye shall see him, and all the inhabitants of the dead, with those found alive at his coming, shall be arraigned before his tribunal, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil ! Tremble, O my soul, at the reasonable expectation of thy share in the solemn transactions of this great day ! Shall the secrets of our hearts, as well as the conduct of our lives, be inspected by infinite wisdom and righteousness, and shall we not give all possible diligence, that we may be found, of him who is appointed to be our Judge, in peace ? Let us all, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear the gracious voice of him, who speaks to us from heaven : Let us cordially submit to the authority of him, whom God has appointed King upon his holy hill of Zion, and who once, as foretold, was cut off to redeem sinners from eternal death. Let us no longer abuse the patience of the great Messiah, lest he swear in his wrath, that we shall not enter into his rest !

THE death of Christ to make reconciliation for iniquity, transgression, and sin, supposes man to be exceedingly guilty in the sight of God. Different terms are
used

used, in the same passage, to give us a just idea of the vileness of his character and ways. At what a moral distance is he removed from God : How deaf to the voice of heaven, and blinded to the things of his eternal peace ! Treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. The way of peace, he knows not ; and there is no fear of God before his eyes. *This* our prophecy, and *this*, the whole gospel represents to be the true state and character of man !

BUT ye who feel your wretchedness, and mourn the guilty part you have taken against heaven, a glorious way is opened for your escape, from that eternal misery, which you have deserved ! The Messiah has been cut off for your sins, and has brought in an everlasting righteousness for your justification in the sight of God. There is glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, and good will towards men ! It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. He descended from the highest heavens ; was stripped of the robes of his glory, and sustained the curse of the divine law, in order to raise sinners from the depth of wretchedness ; and exalt them to the noble, refined, and eternal enjoyments of the world of light ! “ The spirit and the bride, say, Come, And let him that heareth, say, Come, And let him that is athirst, come : and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Survey the wondrous cure :

And at each step, let higher wonder rise !

“ Pardon for infinite offence ! and pardon,

Through means that speak its value infinite !

A pardon bought with blood ! with blood divine !

With blood divine of him I made my foe !

Persisted to provoke ! though woo'd, and aw'd

Bless'd, and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still !

A rebel 'midst the thunders of his throne !

Nor I alone ! a rebel universe !

My species up in arms ! not one exempt !

Yet for the foulest of the soul, he dies :

Most

Molt joy'd, for the redeem'd from deepell gall !
 As if our race were held of highest rank ;
 And God-head dearer, as more kind to man !
 Bound every heart ! and every bosom, burn !
 Oh what a scale of miracles is here !
 Its lowest round, high planted on the skies ;
 Its tow'ring summit lost beyond the thought
 Of man or angel : Oh that I could climb
 The wonderful ascent, with equal praise !
 Praise ! flow for ever (if astonishment
 Will give thee leave) my praise ! for ever flow !
 Praise ardent, cordial, constant, to high heav'n
 More fragrant, than Arabia sacrific'd ;
 And all her spicy mountains in a flame.

NIGHT-THOUGHTS,



THE END.